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ABSTRACT

Responses by various University of Alberta offices to recommendations of the Senate Task Force on Mature Students are detailed. "Mature student" is used to refer to students 23 years old or older. Attention is directed to: support services (library, offices, bookstore); choice of courses in the evening; residency requirements; registration; credit by special assessment; study space; finances; skill improvement; upgrading and remediation; alternate routes of entry; clearance of matriculation deficiencies; admission to quota faculties; orientation and general information services; and counseling services for mature students. Significant strides were made in the area of orientation and general information services for mature students, and a half-time appointment of a mature student adviser was completed. Although library hours were slightly extended, financial constraints prevented Deans' offices being kept open during the noon hours and also made it impossible to provide additional study space in the evenings, and to offer more evening credit courses. A survey indicated that very few students were aware of the credit by special assessment. Also included in this report are a letter summarizing the work of the Progress Review Committee and a brief seminar paper on the mature student. (SW)

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The Senate
The University of Alberta

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REPORT OF THE PROGRESS REVIEW COMMITTEE, TASK FORCE ON MATURE STUDENTS

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APRIL 1985

PROGRESS REVIEW COMMITTEE

TASK FORCE ON MATURE STUDENTS

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April 1985

University of Alberta
Edmonton

The Senate

Canada T6G 2E8

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April 16, 1985.

Mr. Peter Savaryn,
Chancellor,
The University of Alberta.

Eminent Chancellor:

It is my pleasure and privilege to present to you and other members of the Senate of the University of Alberta the report of the Progress Review Committee, Mature Students Task Force. (Incidentally 600 copies of that Report have been distributed to date). I do so as the representative of my colleagues on the Committee, who persevered through time constraints and gave their assistance unselfishly and without hesitation.

At the outset, we were faced with the decision as to whether to report only progress (or lack thereof) on the main recommendations of the Mature Students Task Force, or to make further recommendations from our findings. Wisely, I think, and perhaps with a pinch of cowardice, we chose the former course of action.

Our methodology was quite simple and, I believe, effective. All recommendations were categorized according to the area of the University concerned, and reports were requested on progress towards these goals. While waiting for the responses to our questions, we interviewed three executive representatives from MUGS (Mature Undergraduates and Graduates Society), with a view to discussing their current problems and their reactions to progress since the main Task Force report was published. In general, they seemed pleased with the progress to date, but expressed some disappointment that a Mature Students Centre had not materialized. It was our impression that their concerns centred around problems any new student would face in attempting to enter and cope with the milieu of a large, impersonal post-secondary institution. In addition, our Committee was represented at two other events on campus: the Mature Students Orientation conducted during the first week of January; and the seminar entitled, "The Mature Student: An (Over) Simplified Label for a Complex Condition", arranged by the Committee for Improvement in Teaching and Learning and held in November, 1984. Within that seminar, Dr. Haydon Roberts of the Faculty of Extension presented a paper on the Mature Student, which is included in the attached documentation.

During this period, the Committee received responses from throughout the University on the status of the Task Force recommendations. In general, the responses were returned promptly, with full co-operation from all parties concerned. The Committee was struck by the fact that, in certain areas, some of the recommendations had been quickly implemented. For example, significant strides have been made in the area of orientation and general information services for mature students, through the Office of Student Affairs. Since the original report, a half-time appointment of a Mature Student Advisor has been completed. In addition, the Registrar's Office has adopted the practice of organizing adult information sessions; two were held in 1984, with over 300 participants at each meeting. The Office of Student Affairs holds two Mature Student Orientation Sessions each year, in January and August, The Office of the Dean of Student Services publishes the "Information Handbook for Mature Students" (last revised in June, 1984). While the Handbook was well received by students and staff, a number of suggestions for improvement came to the Committee: the inclusion of bookstore hours, the availability of books through the mail on a C.O.D. basis, and information regarding the possibility of credit by special assessment were mentioned.

You will now be aware, Eminent Chancellor, that there has been some improvement. That is the good news. The bad news is that the economic predicament in which the University now finds itself precludes many of the recommendations of the original Task Force from coming to fruition. For example, the Chief Librarian was able to slightly extend the number of hours the libraries are open, but not to the extent desired by the Students' Union, due to financial constraints. Lack of finances were also cited as the reason behind the inability to keep the Deans' offices open during the noon hours, and to provide additional study space in the evenings. More importantly, the "lack of finances" reason worked against the availability of more evening credit courses. General Faculties Council, at its November 1983 meeting, in direct response to Recommendation 3.1.5, passed the motion, "In view of the financial constraints on the University at this time, no major initiatives be taken to move towards full degree programs being offered via evening courses."

The Committee also noted that parts of the University were ambivalent to some extent in their responses to the recommendations. While in general terms these units agreed, they sometimes stated that "such and such" was always possible, and could be achieved "on demand", but that the demand was minimal, if there at all. An excellent example of this is Recommendation 3.1.9, which deals with the issue of credit granted by special assessment, on the basis of prior learning.

About half the Faculties have this provision, but report that it is generally used very little. However, the Faculty of Nursing, which advertises the procedure widely, has experienced a greater use of credit by special assessment. Surveys have indicated that very few students are aware of the credit by special assessment procedure, thus indicating the need for more effective advertising by the Faculties concerned. One wonders whether or not Faculty administrators are willing to so promote this avenue, and if so, what the direct response from the students would be.

Eminent Chancellor, these are just a few of the highlights of our report. The complete report is attached. As you can appreciate, it has been an enlightening experience, with peaks and valleys, but we can still see the sunlight in the distance. I would be extremely remiss if I did not fully recognize the effort and expertise of my colleagues on the Committee who really made this report a reality. I also wish to acknowledge the able assistance of Mary Totman and the Senate staff; they prodded us when we faltered and put forth excellent suggestions to keep us on the straight and narrow.

Respectfully submitted,

Professor Richard R. Faryon (Chairman)

Mrs. J. Oshry
Mrs. M. Payne
Mr. J. Pratt
Mr. L. Soper

REPORT OF THE PROGRESS REVIEW COMMITTEE
ON THE SENATE TASK FORCE ON MATURE STUDENTS

The Progress Review Committee contacted all those to whom the original Task Force recommendations had been directed. The responses to these recommendations are detailed below.

3.1.4 Support Services (Library, Offices, Bookstore)

> It is recommended that the hours of offices and campus services should be extended beyond their present hours to include the noon hour and at least one evening a week with appropriate co-ordination, publicity and security measures. Additional costs might be avoided by adoption of a flexible time schedule.
>
> Directed to: Deans' Council
> Vice-President, Finance and Administration
> University Libraries

The Students' Union reported that they continue to lobby for extended Library hours with some success. The Chief Librarian advised us that there has been some increase in the number of hours the libraries are open despite the financial constraints he faces.

With rega d to office hours, Deans' Council reported that three faculties have offices open during the noon hour. If financial resources permitted and the demand was apparent, several Deans would support noon hour openings. In addition, some felt it would be desirable to extend office hours to include the evening during peak periods, for instance at registration time. At present only the Faculty of Extension has office hours during the evening.

The Director of Student Counselling Services stated that the office continues to remain open during the noon hour and on Wednesday evenings.

The Dean of Student Services reported that the office of the Dean continues to be closed at noon hour but the Mature Student Advisor and Program Co-ordinator attends the Brown Bag lunch program twice a week, and is available for consultation at this time. She has access to the office so students may consult her and pick up information relating to seminars and other material. Skills improvement and library orientation seminars are conducted in the evenings by the appropriate departments.

As a result of the Task Force recommendation, the Bookstore experimented with extended hours on Thursday evenings for the period January to March 1984. This was unsuccessful in terms of customer count and dollar volume and therefore discontinued for the current year. The Bookstore continues to remain open during the noon hour, and during the Fall and Winter sessions is open on Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. At the beginning of last fall's session, the Bookstore had extended hours in the evening for the first week. It has not been found necessary to add these hours at the beginning of the winter session. There could well be a significant revision to the opening hours of the Bookstore for 1985/86 as it appears that the text books required by students in Faculty of Extension courses will for the first time be sold through the Bookstore. It should be noted that the Bookstore will accept C.O.D. orders, despatching the books to the customer by mail.

The Registrar's office organized an Adult Information Session during May 1984 in the evening which 375 prospective adult students attended and a second one in December 1984 at which there were 325 people. These sessions were devoted to the special needs of the mature student.

3.1.5 Choice of Courses in the Evening

> As the economic circumstances of the day dictate that more and more students must contribute to their own support, the need for alternate class times become imperative. Therefore it is recommended that the issue of the availability of evening credit courses on campus be examined by the university.

Directed to: Deans' Council

General Faculties Council, at its November 1983 meeting, passed the following motion:

> "that in view of the financial constraints on the University at this time, no major initiatives be taken to move towards full degree programs being offered via evening courses."

Deans' Council advised that there is little uniformity across campus in the offering of evening courses. Arts and Education offer a significant number of undergraduate and graduate courses, but most faculties offer few, if any. Several faculties had offered courses in previous years and experienced a very poor response, and some Deans cited the difficulty of finding qualified staff to teach in the evenings and the expensive nature of such offerings, especially if labs were to be involved, as reasons for not offering more evening courses.

As far as the possibility of earning a degree through part-time study at evening credit classes, although the Faculty of Arts apparently does see this as a remote possibility, virtually all other Deans adopted the position that it cannot be done at present and, more importantly, that a degree from the University of Alberta ought not to be possible solely through evening credit course offerings.

3.1.6 Residency Requirements

It is recommended that faculties at the University of Alberta re-examine their residency requirements, and consider what changes would be acceptable academically, yet could be made to accommodate the increasing number of non-traditional students.

Directed to: Deans' Council

Deans' Council considered the above recommendation and reported that at the undergraduate level all faculties appeared to maintain the minimum requirements of at least the equivalent of one year of study (i.e. 5 full courses) at this university. Some faculties have additional requirements. There appears to be considerable flexibility about the way that students can meet the residency requirements and there seems to be no support at all for any loosening of this minimal requirement.

As far as graduate study is concerned, there appears to be some support for a relaxation of the way in which residency is interpreted as a requirement for graduate degrees and the Deans recommended that further consideration should be given to this issue by Graduate Faculty Council.

This apparently has not been done during the past 12 months.

3.1.7 Registration

It is recommended that all efforts should be made to expedite the implementation of a simplified and flexible system of registration for all students. This is particularly critical for part-time students.

Directed to: The Registrar

The Registrar noted the recommendation regarding extended hours of service and reviewed provisions made by other universities. As a result, the University of Alberta has implemented a mail-in registration for students in part-time evening and off campus programs. In addition, a co-ordinator acts as a liaison with faculty offices when, for example, students need counselling or approval for course changes.

3.1.9 Credit by Special Assessment

It is recommended that, for appropriate courses, faculties give increased attention to the development of methods to assess and give credit for prior learning.

Directed to: Deans' Council

Deans' Council advised that there is considerable variation across campus as far as the practice of credit by special assessment is concerned. Half of the faculties permit and make use of it while the other half do not. Those faculties which do permit credit by special assessment report that it is generally very little used. The advertising that takes place within these faculties is usually confined to the information contained in the Faculty Calendar. The Faculty of Nursing, which advertises the procedure widely, does experience a greater use of credit by special assessment.

Recently Institutional Research and Planning has indicated that very few students know of the credit by special assessment procedure in the case of second languages and it seems clear that, if any greater use of it is to be made, more effective advertising needs to be undertaken.

In general, there appeared to be support among Deans to extend the possibilities of credit by special assessment, and the Progress Review Committee feels that mention of this could be made in the Mature Students Handbook.

3.1.11 Study Space

> To meet the increasing demand for quiet study space, it is recommended that the university consider designating empty classrooms as evening study rooms, and make creative use of other spaces on campus not normally utilized for study. Locations should be well-publicized, e.g. in the Students' Union Handbook, the information Handbook for Mature Students and the Gateway.
>
> Directed to: Vice-President, Facilities and Services.

The costs of caretaking, security and energy control have dictated the closing of many campus buildings in the evening. The General Faculties Council endorsed the motion that more classrooms could be left open for student use in the evenings and be designated as such. This has not taken place. The present policy is that if students request classrooms to be opened for study purposes in the evening, such requests would be examined, but no such requests have been received to date.

3.2.3 Finances

If university education is to be readily available to mature people in the general population, it is important to recognize that certain groups of mature students experience real financial problems and may need to be singled out for financial help.

Loans, scholarships, bursaries and awards for the mature student and especially for the part-time mature student appear to be in very short supply. The policies of bodies responsible for such means of financial support should be reviewed, and special consideration should be given to providing financial support for part-time and full-time mature students as a specialized group.

Directed to: Student Awards
Student Finance Board

To date no programs have been developed specifically for mature students by the Alberta Students Finance Board, but the Board recognizes special needs of mature students through its assessment procedures. The Maintenance Grant Program may allocate up to $6,100 per annum per student where warranted, and single parents are the group most likely to qualify. The Federal Government has initiated a loan program intended to cover tuition, books, transportation, day care and incidentals for part-time students who show financial need.

3.3.4 Skill Improvement

The Task Force recommends the establishment for mature students of a comprehensive and well publicized program for the improvement of skills, to be developed and presented by professionals in each of the areas: examinations, essay writing, use of library, study skills, time management.

Directed to: Dean of Extension
Dean of Students

Student Counselling Services endorsed the recommendation to strengthen the offerings of a skills improvement program for mature students. However, the extension of the program is unlikely at this time, because of lack of additional manpower and finances. Student Services sees little justification in mounting extensive publicity campaigns for Skills Improvement Seminars unless the present program can be expanded.

While professional counsellors on campus are equipped to offer assistance in improving general study strategies (for instance note taking, exam preparation), they are not able to offer assistance to students requiring remediation in writing and proper grammatical expression. An effective writing skills improvement program requires counsellors specialized in this area. The Mature Student Program Co-ordinator reported that 150 students had taken part in skill improvement seminars she organized during 1984-85.

The Faculty of Extension offers a number of writing courses directed specifically towards both the student whose native language is English as well as the one for whom English is a second language. While the faculty does not see a requirement for a course specifically designed for mature students, it is recognized that if the regular 25, 20 and 16 hour courses directed toward those for whom English is a native language: Writing Skills, Writing for University, Technical Report Writing and Solving Grammar and Punctuation Problems, be extended to approximately 40 hours, this would provide students with an opportunity to submit an increased number of writing samples for correction and rewriting.

3.3.5 Upgrading and Remediation

> Remediation and upgrading should not be the responsibility of the University's credit faculties and, where required, should be completed prior to admission to a faculty. The potential for the Faculty of Extension to expand its remedial and upgrading courses with a focus on the needs of the mature student should be investigated.
>
> Directed to: Dean of Extension

The Faculty of Extension offers a General Education Development High School Skills Program through the PLATO System. This program consists of 40 - 45 hour remedial packages in reading, writing, mathematics, sciences and social studies. These packages are geared toward people who have not completed Grade 12 and are therefore unsuitable for university students except for skills review. The Faculty of Extension expressed an interest in investigating existing University remedial programs available on computer. Needed courses could be authored by the faculty if none are appropriate.

4.1.1. Alternate Routes of Entry

1. The Task Force recommends that the "non-matriculated adult" category of admission be abolished.

2. The Task Force recommends that the term "mature student" be used uniformly throughout the University to apply to students who are 23 years of age and over.

3. The Task Force recommends the development of a non-program route of admission open to all mature students; for example:

   - Students who meet University admission requirements but who may wish to take courses primarily for interest;

   - students who meet University admission requirements but lack specific requirements for a quota faculty;

   - students who do not meet the University's requirements (at present the non-matriculated adults).

   (a) Criteria for admission to the non-program route should be a minimum age of 23 years and satisfactory completion of the English competency examination.

   (b) The non-program route should provide a limited number of junior level courses (approximately 15-20 courses) which would represent first year requirements for all undergraduate faculties. Possible courses might include 200 level courses in English, languages other than English, economics, mathematics, sciences, accounting, history, psychology, sociology, education, engineering design, speech pathology, and home economics.

   (c) The non-program route would offer great flexibility in that:

   - It would allow a student to take university courses while concurrently taking a High School level course at another institution when it is necessary for a student to clear a matriculation subject which is a faculty prerequisite.

- It would allow a student who wishes to do so to become acclimatized to university work by taking less than a full course load.

(d) Pre-admission and ongoing counselling by an experienced advisor would be mandatory. The counsellor could act as liaison with faculties for information purposes and to facilitate transfer, as well as help students to find the most satisfactory means of clearing matriculation subjects that are faculty pre-requisites.

(e) Mature students wishing to pursue studies in a particular subject or subjects for interest should be permitted to complete in the non-program route up to five full course equivalents including senior level courses (subject to satisfactory performance and necessary pre-requisites) and then be required to consult an academic counsellor to plan future university studies.

Directed to: Deans' Council

The General Faculties Council at its November 1983 meeting decided to retain the non-matriculated adult category of admission. In addition, the Council did not accept the proposal of the Task Force regarding a non-program route of admission. It is understood that one of the Strategic Planning Groups has been discussing this topic. In addition, in his letter to the Senate in December 1984, the Registrar commented on the success of the unclassified student program which gives those students who are primarily taking courses for interest a "desired non-program route of flexible admission and registration". Currently there are 554 students registered as unclassified students. An unclassified student may take one course per term to a total of five half courses, after which it is necessary to transfer to a faculty. Although many students use this program to take courses for interest, some study a junior English course which may be a requirement to the Faculty of Arts, if the applicant does not have English 30 nor successful completion of the writing competency test.

4.1.2 Clearance of Matriculation Deficiences

> University courses at the 100 level should not be used for the purpose of clearing matriculation requirements.
>
> Directed to : Deans' Council

While Deans' Council did not address this recommendation directly as an issue arising from the Report, the matter was touched on as part of discussions on the operating budget prior to the submission of the Report. It was made clear that faculties would no longer be able to continue to offer such a wide choice of 100 level credit courses. However, the Minister of Education, in a letter to the Task Force expressed concern about the student who, having clear entrance to a particular faculty, later elects to enter another faculty, to which s/he does not have the pre-requisite high school courses.

4.1.3 Admission to Quota Faculties

> The Task Force recommends that the Office of the Registrar should develop procedures to adjust the High School and/or postsecondary grades of mature applicants who completed schooling prior to 1973, in order to enable them to compete fairly for entry to quota faculties.
>
> Directed to : The Registrar

Considerable interest was generated by this recommendation relating to admission to quota faculties. The Task Force recommended that a process be developed to adjust the High School or postsecondary grades of mature students to enable them to compete on a more equitable basis with current graduates. Present and past Registrars felt that they could see no fair or practical way of initiating such a process. They felt that this procedure would not make the judgements of the various admissions committees any fairer than they are now.

4.3.1 Orientation and General Information Services

The Task Force recommends the effective and widespread promotion of all information services available to mature students.

- Orientation sessions should be held during evenings and weekends in addition to day time hours and in both the fall and winter terms.

- Means should be found to distribute the Information Handbook for Mature Students to each mature student before registration.

Directed to : Dean of Students
Director of Student Affairs

Mature Student Orientation Sessions are held each year in January and August. In August, they are held on weekday evenings and weekends.

The Student Affairs office believes there is value in conducting orientation sessions during the evening hours as well as during daytime, both in fall and winter, but again resources limit the provision of this service.

Information Handbooks are distributed to new mature students who participate in orientation sessions and are available throughout the year from the Mature Student Advisor. The former Dean of Students believed that it would generally be considered wasteful as well as costly to make the handbook available routinely to all mature students (one quarter of the incoming full-time student body), as many students do not refer to or read such materials. He suggested that the letter of welcome containing an invitation to new mature students encouraging them to participate in the orientation sessions for mature students be revised to include reference to, and a detailed description of the handbook. In this way, interested students not participating in the orientation sessions would know they could request a copy.

During 1983 and 1984 the Students' Union contributed to the mature student orientations by providing financial support to the Office of Student Affairs.

4.3.2 Counselling Services for Mature Students

While some mature students presently receive satisfactory advice and assistance from the various sources of information, the Task Force recommends that all of the services currently available to mature students should be co-ordinated into a single resource unit with high visibility.

This unit could combine most of the services and facilities recommended in this report. For example :

1. An Information Desk for mature student enquiries with information about admission to the University, faculty admission requirements, student loans and other information normally given at the Access Centre; the telephone number to be listed in the Edmonton telephone directory University listings.

2. A full-time academic advisor knowledgeable about all programs, who could act as liaison to faculties and departments and also co-ordinate study skills sessions; each department should consider having a particular individual designated to handle mature student inquiries.

3. A counsellor experienced in working with mature students and knowledgeable about areas of stress common among mature students.

4. A lounge area and a study room open all day, evenings and weekends; possibly an existing facility could be used such as Heritage Lounge in Athabasca Hall.

5. Student involvement would be important. Publicity of the unit and organization of seminars and programs of special interest to mature students could be the responsibility of a Mature Students' Association. The Students' Union should take some responsibility for the support of the unit.

Directed to : Dean of Students
Director of Student Counselling
President, Students' Union

The Director of Student Counselling Services stated that many of the services provided by the office pre-date the Senate Task Force. Two staff members co-ordinate the activities involving mature students. They participate in the Registrar's Information Night for adult students. Student Services organize seminars and a Brown Bag Lunch Program.

The single resource unit recommended by the Task Force Report has been realized by the Office of the Dean of Student Services. The office combines most of the services and facilities recommended by the Task Force as well as the creation of a half-time position - Mature Student Program Co-ordinator and Advisor.

This newly created position is responsible for day-time students (or students able to consult staff during regular hours). The Registrar's Office has designated a co-ordinator to advise and act as a liaison with faculties for part-time and evening students.

With regard to the "high visibility" recommended by the Task Force, an information board and table are set up twice weekly at the Brown Bag lunches co-ordinated by the Mature Student Group and the Office of the Dean of Student Services. In addition, this office - with many others - participated in the Information Nights which have been organized during the past year by the Registrar's Office for those people considering a return to university education after a period of years away from full-time study.

While some action has been taken in the case of the establishment of a new resource unit, the former Dean believed that present resources could, with planning, more adequately meet the information needs of mature students. The Access Centre was the preferred place for such referrals. By using the Access Centre resources, a separate telephone number for mature student information could be initiated.

THE MATURE STUDENT

Presentation at a Seminar sponsored by the Committee for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning

These days, at this university, we do not officially use the term "mature student", as in the past. We use the term "non-matriculated adult student." The Senate Task Force on Mature Students recommended that we drop this term in favor of the old term, "mature student" and by that they meant a person of 23 years of age or older. They arrived at this age figure by assuming that it would ensure that an applicant under this category would have been out of the high school system for at least two years. Apparently with the present age of 21 years, it can happen that young people will stay at high school until the age of 19, will then drop out without a matriculation, and then try the non-matriculated student route into the university.

There are two aphorisms that I've come across, relating to this matter of maturity and age:

> "Only the wise are wise when they're old; old fools twist wisdom into their years."
>
> "Men are little boys who smoke pipes."

In other words, these aphorisms are questioning the idea that wisdom, and maturity, have to do with age. One of the most mature students I've met was a young man of 12 years of age, who acted as my guide around a primary school in the City of London that was a sort of model of the British open primary school system.

I'm making this point to draw attention to the fact that perceptions of maturity have a lot to do with convention, particularly in institutionalized education. Take, for example, the definition of adult education by UNESCO. This refers to organized educational experiences for persons who "are regarded as adults by the society to which they belong." According to the criterion, pretty well every student, undergraduate and graduate, in a university or college is adult; they can vote, buy liquor, have a driver's licence, and be called up for military service in times of war.

Yet they are not conventionally thought of as being in the domain of adult education. We've divided education into basic education (K-12); higher or post-secondary, education (college, university, institute of technology); and adult, or continuing, or further education. And the tendency is to see higher education as a continuation, in some sense, of basic education, and to see the students in it as <u>not</u> being in adult education, despite their being adults by other societal criteria.

A distinction is now being made, by some people, particularly some adult educationalists, between pedagogy and andragogy. Pedagogy, as we know, is the science and process of teaching young people. Going by my Oxford Dictionary, we have applied the Greek word "paidos" - of a <u>boy</u>, to include girl, but someone in our Classics Department tells me that it can also mean girl, so we're off the sexist hook on that one. Anyway, it carries with it the idea of the dependent learner, <u>élève,</u> the one being raised, and it also carries the idea of its being OK for the teacher to be directive and pedagogical, in the slightly tainted sense of that word.

Andragogy, on the other hand, is supposed to be the teaching of adults - and this time it doesn't escape the charge of sexism, because it comes from the Greek word "andros" - of a man. Anyway, its purveyors suggest that in terms of the teaching/learning process, we go by an assumption that the learner is a mature adult, capable of independent and self-directed learning, likely to try to integrate new learning into his or her existing experience, and averse to being directed and controlled. So it suggests the encouragement of independent learning and the avoidance of an inflexible regime of study and evaluation. But it does recognize that even among adults, as defined in the usual terms, some may be dependent in particular circumstances.

And one of these circumstances may be - and often is - where adults have become so acculturated by the dependency-creating school regime that they cling to it, even through to graduate school. I'm sure many of you have experienced that. I certainly have, with graduate students in this University and in universities in two other countries I've worked in. It's a kind of immaturity induced by culture - the culture of school. In some cases it's the broader culture that induces the prolonged immaturity, or dependency. I've worked with adult students in Africa who were very dependent, in terms of relying on me to teach them - which is the cultural respect for the Fundi, the teacher.

So what all this seems to boil down to is the not exactly original conclusion that different people will be at different levels of maturity, independence, and the ability to cope with more non-directive teaching. Some are wise when they are young; some are not wise when they are old. Some are little boys who smoke pipes. So we should presumably, therefore, try to avoid imputing, or ascribing, maturity or immaturity to students en bloc, as the conventional wisdom tends to. We should try to identify intrinsic maturity and work with that.

And what are some of the ways in which this has been tried? Mainly they have involved a restructuring of the process of learning.

There is individualized study, where, after setting the parameters of the subjects, "mapping out the domain", the teacher negotiates a contract with each individual student, or a small group of them, setting out the learning objectives, the method(s) to be used to study, the proposed outcome (a paper, series of papers, etc.), and the basis for evaluation. From then on, the rigid class timetable may be ignored; the students work in the way which is set out and agreed in the contract, meeting with the teacher at regular intervals or as the need arises.

One interesting point is that I first had experience of this kind of teaching in this University in a workshop sponsored by this committee, conducted by Dr. Sue Therrien, who was then in Elementary Education. She was describing an approach which she and some of her colleagues had used with their students, with what they perceived to be a fair amount of success.

Sometimes - and you can see how it could happen - this includes a kind of tutorial process, a regular meeting between teacher/tutor and student.

Then there is the mixture of group process, heuristic learning activities, projects involving group or individual planning, using the experience and

talents of the group, flexible timing, sometimes team or group teaching. This is a refinement and improvement on the somewhat crude group process, sensitivity training, T-group stuff that was around in the 1960's. A few years ago they had a program of this sort in the Faculty of Education, where in the last two years of the B.Ed. program certain students elected to go through what was called Plan B. I once participated in that process for one day, and was very impressed by the commitment and maturity of the students, and the rigor of the learning.

Here is the point. There is a tendency among more traditional academics to think of these kinds of studying as a soft option, superficial, "innovative" in some pejorative sense of that word. There are graduate schools and programs in North America that are called innovative because they apply these principles and processes to the whole graduate program. One irony is that this so-called innovativeness in North American terms is old hat in many respected, prestigious universities in Europe.

What are some of the difficulties that limit the extent to which all this can be tried out?

I've already indicated one of them - the inability, or reluctance, of students to cope with this less structured process after the highly structured and dependency-creating school regime. My own experience is that they can break through this with some effort of their own and understanding on the part of the teacher. One important ingredient is that the educators have to assume - and <u>show</u> that they assume - a maturity on the part of the learner, rather than assuming and showing an assumption of immaturity and lack of responsibility. Because these assumptions show through one's actions. The old cliche goes: in the final event what we teach is ourselves.

A similar difficulty, in respect of older students coming in as mature students, is that many have little or no study skills, and they need some structured help, at least in the early stages of their return to university. On the other side, there is the lack of skills in this type of teaching, on the part of many academics. It's a very demanding kind of teaching.

A further difficulty is the cost of this kind of process. It's demanding of staff and resources. It needs a lot of preparation and involvement. It's partly for this reason that the Department of Elementary Education had to give up the plan B, though they have incorporated some of its features in their existing programs. Another reason for its abandonment was, as I have just indicated - that there aren't many academics around who are comfortable in and good at that kind of teaching.

Finally, there is the question of class size, particularly in these days of high enrollments and staff attrition. This, however, raises another point: that some pretty exciting and lasting learning can be inspired in a large lecture room. I have certainly had this personal experience in my student days. Again, it comes down to the commitment, preparation, and attitude, that we have toward people and learning.

This all relates to the microprocess, the immediate context of the learning, the relationship between teacher and learner.

There's the broader question of the university's total approach to mature students. This involves policies and decisions at the senior administrative level. The Senate Task Force on Mature Students made a number of recommendations in this connection. Some good things have been done, such as the ability to gain credit by special assessment or challenge, the publication of a mature students' handbook, Brown Bag lunches for mature students sponsored by Student Counseling, and information sessions for mature students by the Registrar's Office.

There still needs to be some improvement, for instance in library and bookstore hours, because many mature students are part-time students and cannot spend all day on campus looking for books and periodicals. And this is one thing that teachers can bear in mind in prescribing books and readings. It helps to keep in mind these problems of the post-secondary learner. The danger here is diluting quality of the learning, making concessions that make it easier for the learner but diminish the rigor of the learning. And I guess that problem will always be with us.

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